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Tattoos

by ninjabuuu

Summary

Another dry laugh from Robin, though his shoulders did not shake, his eyes did not light up and his face did not flush. “You’ve grown to know me, Chrom.” His throat was parched from the heat in the room, and though Chrom was still a few feet away from the ivory haired boy, he felt his space invaded and crawled all over. “Too much, I believe.”

Notes

tharja will not be shipped with anyone no worries

there are spoilers! takes place sort of before the endgame

uhh there is self harm in this... but its not typical type (its magical harm!) so thats a warning!
(ps; did people in fire emblem time say asshole? i mean i know that 'damn' was a word and stuff, but asshole is such a modern swear word. its used at the end and im sorry its so out of place)
edit: THANK YOU FOR 2000 HITS I CRIED A LOT WHEN IT HAPPENED i will post more now!!!

**

“you’re not as touch-base with your senses as you’d like to believe, sir,” an inky voice pulled Chrom out of his dazing state, his back popped in alertness and his hand whipped back to his sword. “Or so prove me wrong.”

Tharja stood before his post as nightwatch, dressed in her usual dark attire. Chrom’s gut clenched at the sight of the mage; she was never good news. Whenever she did converse with Chrom, it was either a comment, remark, or just some question that he was never really comfortable answering. His head flipped through the past few days, searching for an event that would cause her to approach him. Finding no event that would lead to her arrival, Chrom mentally braced himself.

“Tharja,” he nodded at her, senses peaked. She smiled ruefully, it was almost a grimace. And it lasted for near a second, before her sly face replaced it. “Why are you up at this hour?”

“You should know better than me about what happens at night,” She said slowly, enunciating every word, lacing it with enough force to keep her voice just above a hoarse whisper. “Not everyone here has perfect sleep schedules, sir.”

Sir. That word cut through Chrom at the end, stabbing him somewhere in the back of his mind. She didn’t think of him as a sir. Hell, she didn’t even think of him as a man; probably not, anyways. Blood boiled under his skin and his pride filled his lungs with bitter hatred for the mage. “Especially the camp favorites, don’t you think? They’ve got it the worst.” Immediately, Robin’s face flew into Chrom’s mind and it took a little bit of concentration to keep it out.

“That doesn’t explain why you’re here, Tharja.” Chrom continued. “We could get Risen here tomorrow morning, and you wouldn’t be prepared.” She actually giggled at that, her hand covering her mouth as she laughed at what Chrom said. The audacity of some people. His heart rate quickened and his wrists inflamed at the pressure of anger that filled his veins.

“Did you know? Maribelle and a few cooks perfected a wonderful new potion,” the mage began moving, slowly, her legs barely working at a crawl as she paced in an open arc. “It’s wonderful for energy; a full night awake, and it kept me up and moving.” She stopped, an arm unfolding from out in front of her to tap her chin thoughtfully. “And Maribelle’s had a hard time keeping that stuff safe; it always manages to get snagged by some nightwalker.” She locked eyes with Chrom and the message was clear. “Maybe you should get another guard out for the med tent.”

“So you think someone’s out doing something?” Chrom’s voice was gruff, his mind whirling through possibilities. “But that can’t be; all the night guards are assigned to report all suspicious activity, no matter what. It’s an order.” This is ridiculous. There have been no reports of trouble, and this woman was telling him that people were sneaking around at night?

“Sully has complained a lot less in the mornings now,” Tharja stretched, her spine popped audibly multiple times, as well as her shoulders. “In the morning bath, she’s chipper as a bird. No more tired nights for her, apparently. She seems to barely be affected by her night shift.”

Chrom thought of Sully, and how Tharja was right. Normally, the knight would stumble into the dining hall, grumbling and muttering. Now she seemed not only on time, but tamer as well. Her complaining about the absurd hours has ceased to a halt.

“And I talked to Robin just this morning,” The dark girl continued, her voice unwavering. “He’s got the worse dark spots under his eyes, the poor boy looks dead.” Tharja giggled again. “Guess sleeping potions can’t cure what the mind has lost, now can they, sir?”

Crystals shattered in Chrom’s ribcage, splints of carbon embedding themselves as feelings that drained all the voices in his mind to a quiet, painless dull. The churning feeling of his stomach multiplied tenfold until it was a heavy buzzing. He felt his hands break into cold sweat and fear trail its long fingernails down his stiff spine.

Robin was doing all of the night shift. Robin was using the potion Maribelle made to hide it. Robin was hiding something. Something that he didn’t want them to know. Something he didn’t want Chrom to know. Something...

In the way his heart thumped unevenly, and his hands clamped in cold sweat, Chrom knew that somewhere deep under all the regret of losing Emmeryn over his futile attempts, and under all the anger over Validar and Grangel, and hidden beneath the fear of Grima, Chrom feared Robin. And Chrom didn’t really know why; he could laugh and smile and work with Robin and feel perfectly fine sever a quiet pluck in a fold of his artery, a nagging feeling that her did his best to ignore.

What if Robin turned out to be the bad guy? He had lived with the Shepherds for over a year now, his relationships and ties strung deep into their group of mishap soldiers. Chrom sent a defiant look over to Tharja, who waved with an awfully forced smile his way. And before the better of Chrom’s judgement could stop him, he was on his feet and moving toward the tactician’s tent, mind locked into auto-drive and all initial feelings slammed into the backseat.

“Oh. and your highness?” The dark mage’s voice sliced cleanly through Chrom’s demeanor and he stiffened in his spot, barely turning his head to acknowledge her parting words.

“You might want to ask dear Robin where he got his tattoo done. What a wonderful shade of purple it glows,” she laughed, barely covering her hand with her mouth as fear overwhelmed Chrom, but he shoved it down in hope of getting answers.

The lord's breathing slowed considerably as he neared the tent farthest from the center campfire; Robin had said he wanted the last tent because it would be good in case of sudden attacks. The excuse was weak, but Chrom felt no other reason to keep the tactician from getting the tent he wished, no matter how positioned it was. Chrom wrinkled his nose; the scent of burning skin was massive over here. Tharjas' words relapsed in his head mockingly, he voice fading in and out of his mind as curiosity forced Chrom's legs to come to a frigid halt. Her heard the rustle of blankets, and the sound of something… sizzling?

Then he heard Robin's voice, unmistakable and gruff, heavy panting and curse words that made the lord wonder if it was really okay for him to enter the tent. Then he smelt the charred flesh, and his mind clicked into a state of bravery, and he silently walked to the entrance of the tent, his gloved hand trembling as he pulled the latch back. Doubt clouded his senses and slowly, and he tried to push any feelings aside for the tacticians sake.

Robin was there, sitting on his bed with nothing but his trousers. His pale hair stuck to his face and his ivory skin was matted with sweat, his chest rose and fell heavily. His back was turned to Chrom, and the lord almost ran completely back to his tent.

Standing out against the charred black of Robin's back was the sign that Robin was burdened with, the unmistakable purple hue of all six of Grima's open eyes glowed dully, the image taunting and a prominent reminder as to who the tactician in front of him really was.

Robin turned quickly, his eyes drawing in Chrom's and for a second, he dropped the tome that was once balanced between his legs, the book falling on its pages to reveal the crest of fire magic. Strong fire magic.

Robin spoke first, his voice thick.

"I was hoping this isn't how you'd find me," Laughter danced on his face but his eyes were steel.

" I was hoping…"

"What," Chrom's mouth opened and he sounded desperate. "What were you hoping for,

Robin? That you could burn the mark off of you?" His voice wavered, his hurt pride along with the fearful look on Robin's face sending a whirlwind of feeling that made his arms clamor with fear.

"I'll have you know," Robin said sardonically, his voice bitter and harsh. "That the mark has a name, Chrom. A name you should know by now."

“I don’t care,” Chrom snapped. “You and I know that setting yourself on fire won’t change a thing. And if I hadn’t found you, you’d keep doing this in secret until you couldn’t even walk!” the lord felt his rage heighten at the simple look that Robin bore. “That much, I know by now.”

Robin flinched, and Chrom didn’t miss the way the tactician's hands wrung together, lost without the comfort of his heavy cloak. He didn’t miss how Robin’s longer hair was free of the usual ponytail he sported nowadays, and hung limply framing his face with pale light. He didn’t miss how Robin’s shoulders were drawn and hunched, and how Robin’s leg clamored with each step Chrom took into the tent.

Another dry laugh from Robin, though his shoulders did not shake, his eyes did not light up, his face did not flush. “You’ve grown to know me, Chrom.” His throat was parched from the heat in the room, and though Chrom was still a few feet away from the ivory haired boy, he felt his space invaded and crawled all over. “Too much, I believe.”

Chrom’s sense of rationality snapped. Here was Robin, harming himself to get rid of something that would never leave? Acting like he was fine in front of the family he now had, spewing a web of lies that all were so deep spun everyone was forced to believe them?

“You’re incredulous,” He found himself saying, causing Robin to look up from his hands and deadlock into Chrom’s blue eyes. “You think that,” His hand rose to signify the mark that barred his back “says anything about you? You think a stupid marking controls you? What is it, some sort of weird hex? A curse? No! It hasn’t caused you any sorts of trouble,” Lies. The words were momentarily ignored by both of them. “And you’re worried about it controlling you? It doesn’t!”

“Maybe it does,” Robin said, rising to his feet and though Chrom saw pain overcome his features, Robin’s anger and Chrom’s pent-up frustration passed it by. “Maybe this whole damn Grima thing, the whole nine yards, controls me. Maybe the fact that Validar *being my father*, if that didn’t make it worse, that I am the descendant of that monster,” Robin took a defiant step towards the lord, and despite being slightly shorter than Chrom, his anger made him no less intimidating. “Maybe I’ve seen myself do things, things that only this curse,” waving his marred hand in front of his face, pain and hurt splayed in his steely eyes. “This curse could make me do!”

“Like what?” Chrom asked almost instantly, stepping closer to Robin until the two men were nearly inches apart, their eyes never separating and their breath hot and overlapping. His mind spun at the close proximity of the tactician, his hands pulsed with the quickened beating of his heart that had managed to begin pumping violently in his ears, the still of the night barely covering the unsuppressed anger and unbridled honesty that radiated between the two of them.

Nothing prepared him for the feeling of his stomach dropping between his feet, his heart bursting from the sheer pressure of hearing the tactician’s next words.

“Killing you, you fool!” Robin cried out, his bare arms snatching the top of Chrom’s sleeves and yanking him down to his height. “Every night I see myself killing you, *over and over*, with Validar telling me exactly how to do so, and the worst part is that this damned body won’t listen to my commands. It kicks harder when I tell it to stop, It grows stronger when I will it to weaken, and the only thing I’m left to do is kill you, you dolt!”

His voice was heavy, and the shock in Chrom’s eyes didn’t stop him; no, it steered him more.

“I see myself, killing you endlessly in the most horrible, cruel ways,” The hands around his shirt trembled, and for a moment Chrom thought the ivory man was crying. “ and the worst thing is that my father,” he spat “that bastard praised me! Her praised me for killing you, and everytime I wake up and see this,” He moved the scarred hand to hold Chrom’s cheek in his clammy palms, his fingers stroking and brushing against the other man’s face. “It kills me, Chrom.” the lord’s mind whizzed at the words. “I’m starting to wonder if maybe just decapitating my hand would end my problems, but we both know that won’t happen,” Robin’s voice was thick and emotions babbled at his throat.

“The p-” Chrom began, his mind slowly making links with all the information he had just received, but Robin wasn’t finished yet.

“It was stupid of me to think like that,” his voice dipped to a whisper, and if Chrom wasn’t already impossibly close to him, he would have moved closer on sheer impulse alone. the thought that maybe this is the source of Grima’s pull on me.” He smiled a grim smile, and looked down at the small space between hm and Chrom. “Guess he’s got me in a better grip than I thought.”

And in the second that Robin pressed his eyes shut firmly, his grip on Chrom’s shirt loosening and the taller man felt his mind whir and did the first thing he felt rationally correct in the situation.

He pressed himself even closer to the tactician, placing a subtle, breathy kiss on Robin’s parted lips. He held himself there, his eyes locked on the tactician's close features, his grey eyes that were wide and unbridled. Robin sucked in a breath heavily, and dropped his hand from Chrom’s face passively, both hands now holding onto Chrom’s shirt as his face slowly crept with red, starting at his ears and splaying his neck and shoulders a lovely, dark shade. “What was that?” The tactician spoke at a whisper. Chrom hummed against the other man, his nose pressed into the warmth of Robin’s neck, ivory hair curtaining around him.

“For starters,” Chrom mused, his hands grabbing for Robin’s warm hands, relishing the warmth between his shaking palms. Calm down, he told himself. “You looked like you were going to explode.” Robin let out a shaky breath, then chuckled, and Chrom felt the rumble deep in his chest.

“Sorry,” Robin muttered, bowing his head so he and Chrom were almost eye level again. Chrom looked up and caught his look. His eyes were swollen with guilt, watery and wavering. “I just…” Chrom squeezed the tactician’s hands gently.

“Tharja's the one who told me what was going on, anyways," Chrom breathed into Robin's neck, willing his heart to slow to a normal pace. Why was his body frightened? It was only Robin. "She seems to know an awful lot about you,"

"That might be true,"Robin clenched and unclenched his hands methodically, his body shifting under Chrom’s touch as he gently pulled away from Chrom, letting his hair cover his eyes as the lord stood to his full height, neither of their hands removed from the position on Chrom’s shirt. “She’s always somewhere near here at this time of night.” Chrom’s hands had stopped trembling, and now held Robin’s hands in a vice grip.

A silence enveloped the tent, still warm from the magic that once swarmed the area. The two men stood there, and Chrom tried very hard not to notice how Robin’s shoulders were slumped from the effort of standing, how he was leaning towards Chrom a little bit more than usual. Forcing his hands off of the tactician, he pulled the ivory haired man onto the bed set there and began searching for items to clean Robin’s back.

“Every time,” Robin began talking, his voice thick. “Every time I killed you, you’d always,” He rose his hands around, then dropped them back into his lap. “Always do this.”

“Do what?” Chrom rose an eyebrow in the tactician’s direction, watching him with alert eyes. Robin’s back was still marred, the skin had cooled down since Chrom had entered, but it was still inflamed with pain. The mark of Grima still glowed, and the skin beneath it seemed not to be affected by the fire either. Chrom shook his head to clear the thoughts of Grima, and forced himself to think of times when Robin had been a blessing.

That was mostly all the time. He was skilled; definitely. He not only was strong with magic, but his grace was excellent for swordsmanship. He knew a mighty ton about lances and bows too, being able to mentor almost everyone on the camp. He was intelligent, enough to know a great amount more about certain topics than most of the soldiers there. He had wit and charm, able to start a lively conversation out of anyone, no matter how shy they appeared. He knew what people liked and disliked, he knew how to direct a conversation or how to get two people to converse. His knowledge was so widespread and well-rounded that sometimes Chrom wondered which of the two was truly the king.

“You’d,” Robin rose his hands again, waving them in a slightly bizarre manner. “Do this.” Chrom was still confused and Robin, through much resistance, complied. “You’d kiss me,” His words barely scraped their way out of his mouth, and Chrom slowed his hands until they froze over the

gauze pads. “You’d act like the biggest problem was me,” Salt absconded with Robin’s control and fell in unsteady beats down his face. “And you’d always smile, and it’s damn annoying to see you smiling when you’re dying-” Robin’s voice rose considerably, barely remembering to breathe as he spoke “And it’s horrible to think of how wonderful you looked when you’re smiling, damnit Chrom for once in your life be selfish and just st-”

Chrom cut Robin off this time, pressing a gloved hand against the tactician’s soaked cheek and lazily swatting at fat tears with his thumb. Robin sucked in breath quickly, his shoulders locking in place as he seemed to freeze himself under Chrom’s gaze.

“If I promise not to smile, will you promise to stop this?” Chrom leaned in, the ticking feeling under his ribcage had not yet ceased since long ago, and now sped up considerably. His hand never left Robin’s face, and when Robin leant into it Chrom had to refrain from beaming. “Deal?” Robin glanced at him once, twice and never truly met his gaze. The lord inwardly deflated, but hesitantly drew his hand away and motioned for Robin to turn.

Soon, he began dressing Robin’s back; the charred skin had cooled off since Chrom had entered, and Robin barely flinched when the gauze gently slid on top of it. Either that, or he was an excellent actor. Chrom tried not to think of the latter. He let his mind wander, gloved hands working on autodrive to clean the ivory man’s back. Robin didn’t hum; which surprised Chrom. Usually, when in the midst of doing something, the tactician would whistle or hum or do something to keep a comfortable amount of noise. But now there was nothing. The shine of Grima, warily lit through the white of the gauze, drew Chrom’s eye like a sore thumb. It was clear why Robin had to wear such thick robes, and even when he didn’t sport his cloak, he wore vests and overshirts.

“You’ve wrapped that area several times now,” Robin mused, amusement slight in his tone. “Unless you want me to look larger than normal, I suppose it’s done.” Chrom blinked once, then realized he had re-wrapped a part of the gauze multiple times, and it was wider than the rest of Robin’s torso. Muttering apologies under his breath, Chrom unwrapped them and pulled back, giving Robin a nod of approval and letting the tactician make his way to his feet.

“It’s nearly dawn,” Chrom offered, the silence that enveloped Robin’s tent was sliding from comfortable to tense. Robin gave a nod in acknowledgement but said nothing, and Chrom was too busy staring intently at the grass to notice Robin approaching him, slowly. The lord went rigid as he felt two arms gather his shirt in their hands, and he watched in silent awe as Robin pulled Chrom gently towards him.

“You’re a fool,” the tactician muttered, and Chrom bit back the smile that loosened his muscles and eased his heartbeat. “ A fool, I tell you. I don’t know how Ylisse hasn’t been cheated out of all its money.” Chrom actually chuckled, and received Robin’s half hearted glare as repentance. "You're a great fool, you know that?” Robin muttered, and Chrom leaned forward again so her and the ivory haired man were yet again face to face, noses barely brushing.

“Then I’m glad to have you then,” Chrom mused lightly. “Youre a wonderful tactician.”

Robin made a face. Chrom did his best not to laugh, but he let a loose smile overcome his features. “You asshole,” Robin grumbled. “I thought you said you wouldn’t laugh.” Robins face darkened, a deep rogue color staining his nose and splaying across his cheeks.

“I’m sorry, Robin.” Chrom didn’t stop smiling, however. “You’re just wonderful.”

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